#### EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

**East Providence School Committee** 

**East Providence City Hall** 

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

**January 10, 2013** 

## **Open Session**

Mr. Monteiro, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:00PM. School Committee members present:

Elizabeth Clupny, Timothy Conley, Anthony Ferreira, Joel Monteiro, Richard Pimentel. Also present:

Dr. John DeGoes, Interim Superintendent, Robert M. Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq.

Motion by Mr. Pimentel to convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I.

Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1), Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2), Litigation/Pending

Litigation -R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2, seconded by Mr. Conley. Vote 5-0.

Motion by Ms. Clupny to return to public session at 7:00PM,

seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0.

Motion by Mrs. Clupny to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0.

**Report Executive Session Votes - None** 

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag & Moment of Silence were observed.

Motion by Mr. Pimentel to amend the agenda to move up item L1 Personnel Appointments, on the agenda, seconded by Mr. Ferreira Vote 5-0.

**Personnel Appointments** 

### **APPOINTMENTS**

Cristina Cassell Culinary Technology Assistant-CTC Effective 01/03/2013

Carolyn Hulboj Cosmetology Technology Assistant-CTC Effective 01/03/2013

Claudia Ainsile Head Swim Coach-EPHS-Effective 11/26/2012 Recommendation requested from Budget Commission Nichole Federowicz Assistant Swim Coach-EPHS-Effective 11/26/2012 Recommendation requested from Budget Commission

Motion to approve by Mr. Ferreira, seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0.

Budget Commission – John DeGoes reported that the Chairman of the School Committee has been

allowed to sit with the Budget Commission for input and discussion; Chairman Monteiro has been

invited to participate in executive session, in recognition of the role of the School Committee; the

Budget Commission is running affairs of the City. Mr. Monteiro said he is most appreciative to have a

voice to represent residents appropriately.

Public Comment I – June Coan, 134 Sunset, announced a Booster Club Event on Sunday at Uno's in

Providence Place Mall; 20% of proceeds will go to the Booster Club; also selling tee shirts and sweats.

Contact June. Booster Club is a 501C3; donations are tax deductible.

In response to a question regarding public comment on the issue of closing a school, Mr. Conley felt that questions/comments to the School Committee should follow the

Superintendent's presentation and recommendation.

Interim Superintendent's Report - Retirements/Resignations

### RESIGNATION

Valerie Lawson-Model Legislature-EPHS-Effective 12/19/2012

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Joanne Tortolani-Resource Teacher-Francis-Remainder of 2012/2013 School Year

Allison Battis-Science Teacher-EPHS-Effective 01/16/2013-End of 2012/2013 School Year

### **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

Ann Ackerman-Grade 5 Teacher-Waddington-Effective approximately 3/18/2013-End of School Year

Motion by Mr. Pimentel to approve, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

# **School Closing**

Interim Superintendent, Dr. DeGoes explained that after coming on board August 6, 2012 as Interim
Superintendent; he learned:

- Money was not put in the FY13-14 budget for Oldham School; the School Department budget begins in 2013 (11/1/13) to finance all the schools and we were told to look at closing one school
- In October in a meeting at RIDE to talk about expending the\$7million remaining from the
- \$15 million bond to address school rehabs for deteriorating conditions in schools (safety, fire,
- asbestos issues), he learned when talking about how to spend that money; they had already spent
- over \$6 million and it was made clear that RIDE would not look favorably at spending \$2.1
- million on Oldham. During a number of School Committee meetings, School Committee
- member Rossi pointed out that to consider closing Oldham did not make sense; the center
- of the city may be easier to disburse students. Dr. DeGoes said he thought that made
- sense and that we should look at alternatives; his goal was to find a situation where we
- could realize \$2 million of savings; factors (rehab costs, displacement of students,
- additional transportation; space; educational outcomes student social relationships) were
- considered by a committee (Principals and the Director of Facilities) which looked at a

number of considerations; (space in elementary schools, if looking at a school in the center of the

city; possibly moving grade 5 to open up classrooms and putting 5th graders at one middle school

and Grades 7-8 at the other which would make sense educationally and could be a benefit

especially for Grade 7 -8 students.

Problems considered while looking at cost factors: displacing students; major re-organization of

School district lines; busing costs would be a big issue; looking at funds that had to be developed;

there were some things about the options that did not work.

Dr. DeGoes recommended that Oldham School be closed for the following reasons:

- Oldham is the oldest school building
- We would need \$2 ½ million dollars to complete all the work necessary at Oldham to open it in September 2013
- Oldham has the lowest population and we would be disbursing approximately 178 students
- If we send the Oldham students to Waddington, they can take that entire population, so that student relationships would not be interrupted, there would be no additional transportation (two buses would transport those student to Waddington) and we would then

assign all new Kindergarten students in Riverside for Oldham/Waddington to Meadowcrest, which currently houses 3-5 year old handicapped students, and does not currently have the opportunity to have students progress to a mainstream Kindergarten. He felt this would be a win-win for Meadowcrest.

• Cost savings; least disruptive, and benefits to Meadowcrest makes this the best move at this time if we have to close a school; it is cost prohibitive to keep Oldham open since we need to find \$2 million dollars.

Dr. DeGoes recommended to the School Committee that Oldham be closed at the end of the 2012-13 school year.

Mr. Conley stated that he appreciated the Superintendent's position; however, he was embarrassed by the

graduation rates of 73.4%, 76.7% and 78.6% for the last three years; Oldham is the only school leading

as best performing, while Hennessey and Waddington have "typical" ratings. As far as the

census, he felt there had been a conscious effort to make the enrollment smaller just to close it; he asked

who decided that and has been setting it up. Mr. Conley stated that is in Violation of Title 16; an

educational policy decision is under the auspices of the School Committee and the Budget Commission

is in violation of this. Mr. Conley voted for the bond to improve the needs of Oldham; the \$2 million was

used for the High School asbestos abatement. He felt that we should be investing in things that work; that

is why the Budget Commission came to the city; we were investing resources in things that fail; there is

no way can he support this; we would be closing the only school which is a model of success. The

Terrace kids would be going to Oldham; this is disenfranchising the will of the voters and he will not be a party to it.

Mr. Ferreira asked where in the analysis was Oldham required to receive \$2 million.

Mr. Conley said there are no safety issues with staff and we did not need changes there in 2011; the staff is not in peril; there is no credence to that; it's ridiculous; if in peril,

why are kids there now?

John DeGoes explained that the roof is deteriorating and needs to be addressed and with the fire code problems; the school will not be able to open.

Mr. Conley did not understand why we used the money for the high school; it should have been put on the bond for voters to decide.

Mr. Ferreira asked if Mr. Catelli could explain where the \$2 million is going; what is pressing; why all now; could it be deferred to next year?

Ed Catelli, Facilities Director, stated that the problem is with the fire systems; all except Kent Heights

School have to be updated; the Fire Chief already received an extension to open schools; last year fire

alarm at the high school, middle schools, and now the elementary schools. At Oldham, \$2 million was

earmarked to do repair work on doors and windows. The bond was \$6 million on first phase to comply

with life and fire for all schools. The Health Department ordered asbestos abatement; the fire alarm was

\$2 million for elementary for security systems, doors; fire and safety; Oldham would need updates on fire

alarm; issue with open rooms at Oldham and Waddington, which cannot be locked down; considerable money needs to be spent on hardware and doors.

Mr. Ferreira asked if the \$20-\$30,000 for toilets could be used toward the fire alarms; why not wait two to three more years for updating bathrooms. Mr. Catelli explained that most bathrooms were done in the

\$12 million dollar Johnson Controls energy performance bond, wherein they (JC) have to save us money or they are not paid for the work.

Joel Monteiro questioned the implementation of gym, art, music, lunch, and the overall quality of education next school year after adding to the number of students already at Waddington.

Dr. DeGoes explained that the Principal will work on the schedule; this has already been dealt with and the Principal would be able to handle these issues.

Mr. Ferreira would like to have a meeting where all of these issues can be discussed; times in all schools;

issues now with the increase in walking distance; congestion at the schools; going forward

that could get worse. Additional units of apartments (more students) are a concern also and he wants to

feel comfortable going forward with any changes.

Dr. DeGoes stated that a meeting/hearing can be scheduled at Riverside Middle School; he will have staff available to answer any questions from residents and parents; as far as increases in future enrollment, students in 5th grade could be moved to the middle school with

Grade 5 and 6 at one and 7 and 8 at the other.

Motion was made by Mr. Ferreira to amend the order of the agenda in order to hold Public Comment II, seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0

Sheila Duckworth, a parent, stated that all of these decisions affect her and her budget; by cutting buses,

her son no longer has a bus and walks in the street when it snows which is not safe; concerned about

Kindergarten at Meadowcrest because in 2015 that will affect her other child; how will she be able to

drop off two kids at two different schools; will the times be changed again; she might have to get two

sitters. These changes always affect the families.

Ray Linneman, Transportation Supervisor, stated that time had been taken into consideration; times

would be 9:10 AM at Waddington and 9:15AM at Meadowcrest; they allowed five minutes. The policy

is one mile limit for bus transportation.

Tim Conley asked how someone could get from Waddington to Meadowcrest in five minutes; that decision is not doable and puts kids at risk; he cannot support it.

Mr. Ferreira had concerns and does not want to see this happening; he wants answers for the public;

Taxpayers deserve answers to their questions.

Mr. Monteiro stated that School Committee all have these same concerns and questions and are

Undecided and looking for the best decision for kids. He asked that everyone please give their input to

the School Committee in order for them to make a decision for parents and the city overall.

Chrissy Rossi, City Council member agreed with Mr. Conley that the city is losing rights on a daily basis;

the Budget Commission only asks if we can afford it.

Dr. DeGoes stated that the savings would be about \$70,000 for heat and electricity and \$ 2.1 million plus another \$400,000 for additional things that need to be done for safety concerns.

Discussion about the money from the bond referendum.

Mrs. Rossi stated that closing a school in Riverside leaves one school and no option for Riverside;

Hennessey, a failing school has \$2 million of the \$15 million; there

are four schools in center of

city; she disagreed with the Meadowcrest option because it needs work, there is no gym or place for the

kids to eat lunch. She asked who at RIDE said that it was not favorable to spend money on Oldham; the

last Superintendent said nothing about it; there was no mention of closing schools; no mention about

moving money around or the ability move money around. She also had concerns about adding students to

buses which are already overcrowded. She felt this was another bad plan and thought bids should have

been solicited for the room at Oldham first; the issues have not been vetted.

Mr. Ferreira felt that things have to change; he is convinced that the school could be kept open and that the costs of replacing the roof should be obtained first; we are talking about saving \$70,000 based on what ifs; this is not what is done in the real world; we should know to the penny what money is needed and we don't have exact numbers to work with.

Dr. DeGoes said he met with the architects and the engineer this afternoon and the cost could be higher or lower; bids are done after a project is approved.

Mrs. Rossi asked why close a school that excels; there is not one

thing good for the kids; just saving \$70,000 is not good for children.

Mr. Conley stated that by closing that school, it shows that we don't care about education; we need to find money for Oldham which is a shining star.

Dr. DeGoes said he will not accept that he or any other educator is making a move to hurt education; he

was charged with an issue from the Budget Commission to close a school; if we spend money to open

Oldham we will take it away from other schools or we need more money.

Elizabeth Clupny asked if any other schools had been looked at for closing. Dr. DeGoes stated that he looked at Whiteknact, but they have already spent over a million dollars of the bond money there and if we closed it, 40% of the money may have to be returned to the state.

Mrs. Rossi thought that more research should have been done and that this proposal should be rejected.

Maureen Buckett – thanked Mr. Conley; students from the Terrace now go to Waddington with 73 on

a bus; she did not understand why we would pack more kids on a bus

to Waddington; she appreciates
the School Committee looking into this further as she does not agree
with it.

Fred Rybka asked if maps had been drawn up; he thinks it would be a lot more than two buses.

Mr. Linneman explained how the transportation would work if the Oldham students were moved to Waddington.

Mr. Rybka had many concerns about how the bond money would be spent and he doubted there would be

any cost savings in the proposed transportation plan. He does not believe the entire roof at Oldham needs

immediate replacement or that repointing work at the schools needs to be done immediately and that

money was taken from one place to do work at another building; we are looking at a small amount of

money to close the one school that is high performing which is shameful; he did not understand how this would benefit us.

Ronald Warr provided a handout; \$1.6million was used to repair Hennessey, an under performing

School. Putting Oldham kids at Waddington, the costs would go up

at Waddington by adding 150 kids.

In 2008 Oldham numbers lowered purposely over years from 250 to 177; we need to look at a report

as to where those kids are and where they should be; he asked if this was to raise real estate values in Waddington area. Money has been put into the school for Smart Boards, painting, etc. All the schools need work which should be bid out. How can RIDE go along with closing a top performing school?

Mr. Warr felt we had to redistrict because kids go all over the city; full day Kindergarten is not in the budget; will this affect Title I federal funds?

Dr. DeGoes explained that we have number of schools which do not receive Title I money; not enough money to go around; if Title I school is closed, we should not lose the money. He was not in favor or closing a school, but has done the plan; he cannot recommend that the Budget Commission cut full

day K and he will advise them he cannot support that; he does not believe full day K is in the budget.

Christy Corbett –parents just found out; who would move here; looking at statistics, this is a high

performing school; she thanked Mr. Conley. She asked if the teachers, custodians will go over to

Waddington; March is teacher layoffs; she asked that they take time to make decisions regarding

teachers, parents; look at other long term options not based on money.

Dr. DeGoes said that people have stated that Oldham is high performing and we are proud of

administrators and teachers, but most of our schools are high performing; he would be pleased to

send his kids to most all of our schools; we are giving the impression that only one is great and

others not; this is a good school system but we have financial problems and have to find a remedy

that affects the least amount of students.

Mr. Ferreira asked when will we know the answers; we owe that to the teachers; glitches in

everything we do; at next meeting we need to review bus schedules and come up with a plan as to

how it will work. He believes one school will have to close but not happy about unanswered

questions; if the plan is 100% go, we should tell the teachers; he doesn't want to wait until June.

Dr. DeGoes stated that this is not about eliminating teachers and the EPEA contract takes care of positions.

Val Lawson - President of the East Providence Education Association

agrees with the assessment of

our schools and teachers; they understand the fiscal situation but support neighborhood schools and

will advocate for all day K; both are important and are sound educational practice. Ms. Lawson

stated that according the regulations (BEP) most times teachers find out at end of year; would like to

change that process and is willing to work on it.

Cathy Conley, 194 Terrace Avenue – when she purchased a house assured the school was Oldham;

all three kids at Waddington; supplies for support at each school; no proper text books; using copies;

social experiment; teachers given proper tools and look what was accomplished; now transfer kids to

Waddington; more stress on supplies, set Waddington up for further failure.

Dr. DeGoes stated he does not have answers based on surety this will happen; Oldham receives

supplies because Title I; don't get money to buy technology equipment; cannot compete with Title I

schools; equipment will need to go to Title I School; depends on numbers and percentage of student

population to qualify; if cannot achieve, will not go

Mrs. Conley asked if the money is available, why not use the money approved; is it illegal to put it somewhere else.

Dr. DeGoes stated there are sufficient classrooms to run the school district so they are not willing to let us spend money there.

Motion by Mr. Conley to send a letter to the Commissioner of Education, Deborah Gist, or the

Assistant Commissioner requesting specific reasons why RIDE will not support spending money on

Oldham School. Motion seconded by Elizabeth Clupny. Vote 5-0

Mr. Rybka requested that we get all day Kindergarten back; Dr. DeGoes will go before the Budget

Commission to make that plea. Mr. Monteiro stated that he has done his part to reach out to officials to

put pressure on the Commissioner for full day K; voices here need to reach the state house; call legislators or send emails.

Mr. Rybka asked how much money would it take to save Oldham; parents need to pitch that to the

Budget Commission; he asked for facts on how much will it cost to close Oldham.

Dr. DeGoes stated that the district would need approximately \$2 million to keep Oldham open.

He said the School Committee will schedule a public hearing; if they make decision not to close the school and the Budget Commission goes along with it, money will need to be reallocated; he did not anticipate any layoffs associated with closing Oldham. Mr. Rybka requested that more precise figures be available for the public hearing to be able to make decisions.

Mr. Monteiro stated that Dr. DeGoes was asked to put this information together to make a

recommendation on the best option and that this situation is not enjoyable for any School

Committee; everyone wants to make a good decision; we need to decide if we have ample

information to take a vote on the issue.

Dr. DeGoes stated that it is required by state law that the district notify RIDE six months in advance

of closing a school; it has nothing to do with notification of layoffs.

Mr. Ferreira had an issue with

the deadline to close Oldham School.

Tim Conley requested legal opinion to determine if this is a violation of Title 16 and exceeds the

statutory power of the Budget Commission. Motion by Mr. Conley, seconded by Ms. Clupny.

Vote 5-0.

Hillary, President of PTA at Waddington assured all that everyone will be welcomed at Waddington

but there are problems now with parking and traffic issues in the neighborhood and this would bring

in additional staff and families to the area; lunches, gym schedules, and assemblies may be difficult.

She does not like the idea of Kindergarten being moved to Meadowcrest. Additional concerns were

only one secretary and copier now at Waddington; they have only five Smart Boards; she would like

to know if the Title I funds will still be available for additional equipment.

Ms. Clupny asked how long the kid s would be on the bus from Riverside to Meadowcrest. Mr.

Linneman stated that the running distance from Rumford would be 45-55 minutes; Riverside to

Meadowcrest about 35 minutes now; can pick up regular stops (20-30 minutes more) three stops

about 50 minutes; he has already cut ten buses; people not happy; difficult to do but can be accomplished.

Discussion regarding safety issues with the open floor plan, how to make it safer and the cost

involved. Mr. Catelli will need to look into that.

Ms. Clupny stated that no one on the School Committee wants to close a school; but four of the

schools are so close together; we have already spent \$1.9 on Hennessey; she had an issue with five

year olds on buses for long period of time and she has a lot of the same questions as the parents; how

many schools have we already spent money on.

Mary Teixeira – hated to hear about a school closing; spoke of integrity of Dr. DeGoes on the present options; she would not want her school to close but if all could go together it would be OK;

Staff has to make do with or without technology, copiers, textbooks; they figure out how to teach

without it. Budget Commission here because education has not been a priority in the city; teachers

disrespected; in her town, taxes raised every year; schools make good community; people have

to realize what is important; many have left the School Department in the last few years; need to

respect and invest in education to draw people to the city; thanked the Budget Commission for their

service and thanked Dr. DeGoes.

Record of Previous Meeting – A motion was made by Mr. Pimentel to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 13, 2012, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Finance Report – No changes in revenue; about \$3 million of surplus bills still coming in.

Vote was taken to request that John DeGoes extend his services until the search for a permanent

Superintendent is completed. Dr. DeGoes worked with the Budget Commission to extend his services;

The School Committee appreciated that. Motion: Mr. Pimentel, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Requisitions – Bill List

Warrant #

 1281 12/12/12 \$
 77.00

 1282 12/12/12 \$
 32,950.00

 1284 12/20/12 \$
 90,482.00

 1285 12/20/12 \$
 490.50

 1286 1/2/13 \$
 799,354.45

 1287 1/2/13 \$
 1,163,198.76

 1288 1/2/13 \$
 279,859.27

1289 1/2/13 \$ 20,822.62

1290 1/2/13 \$ 32,546.00

1291 1/3/13 \$ 316,050.04

Motion to approve by Mr. Pimentel, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0

Appointment to Carousel Committee – Motion by Mr. Pimentel to nominate Anthony Ferreira, seconded by Mr. Conley. Vote 5-0

Vote to Approve Superintendent's Recommendation to close a school

– Motion by Mr. Ferreira to

defer the vote until a public meeting/hearing at Riverside Middle
School, date to be decided,
seconded by Mrs. Clupny. Vote 5-0

Mr. Monteiro thanked everyone who took the time to come to the meeting to provide input.

Superintendent Search – John DeGoes reported that the deadline for applications closed on

December 28, 2012; there were 16 applicants and a committee is being organized to review

applications and to schedule interviews. Mr. Monteiro stated that he will serve on the Search Committee

with state members; the School Committee requested some ownership in the selection of a Superintendent

and School Committee is actively trying to maintain as much control as possible.

Mr. Ferreira reported that Orlo Avenue School was awarded \$5,000 by Alan Shawn Feinstein.

Mr. Ferreira thanked Mr. Ed Catelli, Facilities Director for the recent snow removal job.

Motion to adjourn by Mrs. Clupny, seconded by Mr. Conley. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia A. lannelli, Administrative Assistant

Elizabeth Clupny, Clerk of the Committee